

EXHIBIT 15

Michigan Government

GOP calls for Michigan election probe. Officials say their claims are weak.



The Republican National Committee says it is deploying lawyers to investigate possible voting irregularities in Michigan. Elections officials say each of their “irregularities” has a simple explanation. (BridgeDetroit photo by Ralph Jones)



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Michigan Government



BLOOMFIELD HILLS — The Republican National Committee is deploying legal teams to Michigan and three other battleground states to investigate what its calls “irregularities” and unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud amplified by President Donald Trump.

Michigan’s GOP-led Legislature, meanwhile, will convene oversight committees Saturday to begin an [“inquiry”](#) into the state election and counting procedures.

RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel, who lives in Michigan, announced the legal effort Friday in Oakland County, claiming the party is reviewing more than “100 incident reports” from Republican challengers who this week flooded Detroit’s absentee ballot counting board.

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- [Trump, who now claims fraud, got more votes in Detroit than most Republicans](#)
- [Trump’s options narrow in Michigan. Lawsuit, recount seen as long shots.](#)
- [What happened when conservatives tried to halt Detroit’s election count](#)

Democrat Joe Biden won 94 percent of the vote in Detroit, a liberal stronghold, and won the state by nearly 150,000 votes, according to unofficial results. Trump, however, [falsely claimed](#) Thursday that he won Michigan, calling Detroit one of the most corrupt cities in the nation.

McDaniel made few new allegations and did not offer any evidence to back up claims made by Trump and other Republicans. Democrats and other critics have accused the president of attempting to undermine faith in the democratic process, but McDaniel urged the public and press to delay final judgement on the outcome of the election.

“We need to pursue these irregularities and we need people to be patient and give us the time to investigate,” she said. “These are serious allegations.”

The RNC has also sent legal teams to Arizona, Georgia and Pennsylvania, states where Biden is leading and could secure enough Electoral College votes to defeat Trump. Unlike Michigan, where the count is complete, workers in those states continue to tally a flood of absentee ballots that have generally favored Biden.

McDaniel did not say whether Republicans will petition for a Michigan recount, which a candidate can request after ongoing county and state canvasses.

“I’m not going to jump the gun, but these irregularities are so concerning that all of us should be worried,” she said.

Here’s a look at the GOP allegations about the Michigan election, and explanations from state and local officials who dispute the claims.

The claim: Poll workers ordered to “change the date” on ballots

McDaniel accused Detroit senior elections adviser Chris Thomas of ordering poll workers to “change the date” on “a bundle of ballots” at the city’s absentee counting board, which was located inside the downtown TCF Center.

Those ballots “should not have been immediately counted because there was no evidence the ballots were received by the state-mandated deadline of Nov. 3,” she said, telling reporters that Republicans have referred the matter to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Michigan.

The Trump campaign made similar claims in a lawsuit rejected Thursday by Michigan Court of Claims Judge Cynthia Stephens, who dismissed a poll challenger affidavit as “hearsay.”

In a Friday statement, Thomas said he was saddened by the “[unfounded allegations](#)” regarding the Detroit election. The back-dating accusations are “wrong and reveal the person making them doesn’t know Michigan’s election process,” he said.

Thomas, who worked 36 years as the state’s election director, told Bridge Michigan on Thursday that no late ballots were counted in Detroit.

There were roughly 200 ballots that had not been “fully logged” into the state’s Qualified Voter File when they were received at satellite clerk’s offices, he said. The ballot envelopes were physically stamped with a receipt date, however, so the city directed workers at the TCF Center to use that stamp date to enter them as received in the Qualified Voter File, he explained.

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“When they set up the satellite offices, they brought in furloughed [workers] who did a great job but they may not have dotted all the I’s and crossed all the T’s in some instances,” Thomas said. “It was not a huge number of ballots.”

He added Friday: “The scenario described actually shows a process designed to eliminate errors working to do just that.”

The claim: ‘Software glitch’ may have affected many counties

McDaniel cited what she called a “major software issue” in Antrim County, where local officials initially reported a lopsided advantage Biden in the Republican stronghold, and questioned whether the software “could have caused problems in other counties as well.”

There’s no evidence of an Antrim-like vote swing in any other Michigan county. There, a tally that showed Biden up by about 3,000 votes has been corrected to show Trump carried the county by about 2,500 votes.

Antrim County Clerk Sheryl Guy, a Republican, [told the Detroit Free Press](#) that officials sent the initial results to the state without checking them. They later discovered the mistake and fixed it.

Cox, the Michigan GOP Chair, suggested that other counties that use the same software “need to closely examine their results for similar discrepancies.”

Michigan has 83 counties; Antrim is one of 69 counties that use Dominion Voting Systems equipment, according to recent state data.

Unofficial results show Trump won 63 of those counties, while Biden won six: Wayne, Kent, Ingham, Saginaw, Marquette and Leelanau.

That aligns with historical trends. Wayne, Ingham, Saginaw and Marquette counties are typically Democratic counties, while Kent has been trending Democratic. Leelanau has favored Republican, but Trump won the county by less than 500 votes in 2016.

Kent County Clerk Lisa Posthumus Lyons, a Republican who was the party’s nominee for lieutenant governor in 2018, told Bridge she has “full faith” in the Dominion product that both Antrim and Kent counties use.

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"What happened in Antrim County appears to be a human error in dealing with the software, and errors occur," she said.

The claim: 2,000 ballots 'given to Democrats' in Oakland County

Suggesting a pattern of vote total irregularities, McDaniel told reporters that "just last night in [Rochester Hills], we found 2,000 ballots that had been given to Democrats, that were Republican ballots, due to a clerical error," McDaniel said.

Rochester Hills Clerk Tina Barton, a Republican, acknowledged there was a local input error when vote totals were sent to Oakland County, but the discrepancy was fixed as soon as it was discovered, she said, calling Romney's framing "unfortunate."

"Two thousand ballots weren't suddenly found," Barton told Bridge. "It was a glitch when the file was sent in. As soon as it was caught, it was corrected."

On election night, as the city sent results to the county, a file from one absentee ballot district did not appear to properly transmit, Barton said.

So workers sent it a second time, without realizing the first had actually gone through. They later discovered it had been added to an in-person voting precinct tally rather than absentee count, she said.

As a result, those absentee ballots were essentially counted twice in unofficial results initially posted on the Oakland County website. Democrats voted by absentee ballot more often across Michigan, so the error did inflate the Democratic vote tally, Barton said.

The correct tallies were posted on Oakland County's website Thursday. According to the updated numbers, Biden beat Trump by 108,066 votes in Oakland County, winning 56 percent of the vote.

Barton noted that Michigan has a "pretty robust" canvass process in which the county and state will review local votes before certifying the election.

"So there are measures in place. There are gatekeepers to the process, and obviously the process worked here. We did find that the file was sent twice."

In a Friday evening [statement](#), Barton added: “As a Republican, I am disturbed that this is intentionally being mischaracterized to undermine the election process.”

The claim: GOP challengers ‘locked out’ of Detroit absentee counting board

Michigan GOP Chair Laura Cox claimed that officials locked Republican challengers out of an absentee ballot counting board at the TCF Center and “knowingly created a system” that did not allow Republicans “to have the number of challengers we’re legally obligated to have.”

She and McDaniel also both said that at one point, workers at the TCF Center put cardboard over windows of the counting room.

They did that to “conceal the truth,” Cox alleged. “What else could they be hiding?”

City officials have called similar claims gross exaggerations.

It’s true that some poll watchers were temporarily barred from entering the Detroit counting board on Wednesday, but the city said that was because so many were already inside that there were concerns about the safety of workers given COVID-19.

The place was “packed” with poll challengers from both political parties when the health department and police decided to limit additional access as a safety measure, Thomas said. There were “way too many people. If we don’t all end up with COVID, it’d be a miracle.”

GOP poll challengers who were shut out began banging on the windows. Workers put cardboard over the windows because election workers felt intimidated by people banging on windows, city officials told The Detroit Free Press.

Some of the GOP challengers were “badly trained” and “very disruptive and kept trying to slow things down,” said Mark Brewer, an election attorney, and former chair of the state Democratic Party who served as a Democratic challenger at the TCF Center.

“When you’re challenging, you’re permitted to observe and make legitimate challenges, but I was there all day and didn’t see one legitimate challenge.”

Playing by the rules?

About 100 supporters of President Trump filled the office of the Oakland County Republican Party headquarters for the press event on Friday, many holding signs and a few cheering as McDaniel.

Among the crowd was Jennifer Seidl of Farmington, who said she is concerned about the atmosphere and activities at TCF Center. She's described what she saw to party officials, from a relatively calm Wednesday morning to heightened tension later that day and Thursday.

By midday, far fewer Republican challengers were present and the mood had changed.

"They were talking at the tables about intimidation and 'don't let them near you' and 'don't let them talk to you,'" Seidl said. "They wouldn't let us in to see the ballots."

She's waiting for assurances that the election was fair, or that irregularities will be confirmed. The outcome of the races don't need to be changed as part of that, she added.

"Whoever wins wins," she said. "That's the process. That's what happens. But I want it to be done fairly."

While McDaniel mentioned taking complaints to the affidavit stage, it's unclear if the Michigan GOP has obtained any sworn statements about anything that happened in a polling place.

However, Rocky Raczkowski, chair of the Oakland County Republican Party, said after McDaniel's appearance that the complaints are being vetted and the party has rejected some as not worth pursuing.

"We tried to focus and walk them through what's legal and what's not legal," Raczkowski said. "Emotions are high. They shouldn't be. We should let the system play out."

McDaniel and Cox tried to appeal to all voters by saying getting the process right will improve future elections. They did so, though, by repeatedly criticizing Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, Thomas and Detroit officials.

"It shouldn't take us this long to count votes. Why is it that we always have issues in a specific area?" Raczkowski said. "Why is it always in Democratic areas?"

Raczkowski rejected the possibility that the party focusing on the majority-Black city of Detroit could be motivated by race.

“This is not color or race,” Raczkowski said. “It’s the propensity of the Democratic Party to not play by the rules.”

Raczkowski did not mention that Kent County took nearly as long to count ballots as Detroit. Nor did the GOP send hundreds of poll watchers to scrutinize the process there.

Protests in Detroit

While McDaniel was speaking in Bloomfield Hills, more than 200 Trump supporters, most of them white and middle-age, gathered in front of the TCF Center in Detroit, protesting the city’s already complete absentee ballot count.

Protesters held signs reading “Stop the steal” and “Voting closed on Nov. 3rd.” and chanted “No voter fraud! No voter fraud!”

Brett Waldrop, 45, of Monroe County, was one of the attendees. He was also one of several election challengers with the conservative Election Integrity Fund who were barred from entering the TCF Center in Detroit on Wednesday due to capacity issues related to COVID-19.

“They wouldn’t let us watch,” Waldrop told Bridge. “If they’re not doing anything wrong, why don’t they allow the actual laws to work?”

When asked to cite specific incidents of fraud that occurred at the TCF Center, Waldrop told Bridge, “I don’t have any specific examples.”

Ralph Gaines, 29, of Detroit, one of a dozen counter-protesters who remained on the other side of a fence separating the protesters, said he came because he believes every vote should be counted.

“Here in Michigan, everybody did what they were supposed to do,” Gaines said. “These protesters are just listening to Trump and his rhetoric, and now they want to voice their opinions in the wrong way.”

Bridge Michigan reporter Mike Wilkinson contributed to this report.